



# Connecting

Across Rural Alaska



2017 Rural Alaska Program Report



# Welcome

## What's Inside

- 2 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS
- 3 PROGRAM OVERVIEW
- 4 IMPACT REPORT & MAP
- 5 CAMP FIRE DIFFERENCE
- 6 WELLNESS AND NUTRITION
- 7 COMMUNITY CONNECTION
- 8 COMMUNITY PARTNERS
- 9 CAMP FIRE STAFF
- 10 PARTNERS
- BACK GET INVOLVED



Teens pose in the photobooth during a community dance in Chevak.



2017 Rural Alaska Program Report



## Making Connections

Dear Friends,

We are grateful to be celebrating another year of our Rural Alaska Program. The summer was full of laughter and play, all while building impactful relationships and experiences. Sometimes, however, we found ourselves helping youth through difficult times, playing a role as listener and connector.

This summer, one story stands out. It was late on a Friday night when a teen approached a Camp Fire staff to tell them she was worried about her brother in a neighboring community. He had been texting her saying he was “giving up and going to find a gun.” Our staff acted quickly and we were able to reach a tribal leader in that community. When we heard back about the teen in crisis, the response was “We got to him in time.”

*We got to this youth in time because we created an environment for a youth to feel safe and heard and because our staff knew what to do. We got to him in time because a funder provided the resources for us to be in the region and because a village leader acted immediately and involved their crisis team. We got to him in time—all of us.*

Stories like these guide our work, driving our purpose of building authentic connections. It is because of our amazing partners that we have had the privilege to reach so many young minds.

Warm Regards,

  
Barbara Dubovich  
CEO, Camp Fire Alaska

  
Melanie Hill  
Manager, Rural Alaska Program



# Highlights



Partnering with Afognak to bring wellness curriculum and outdoor survival skills to their residential camp, Dig Afognak.



Teaching kids about cold-water safety is one of the needs communities mention most.



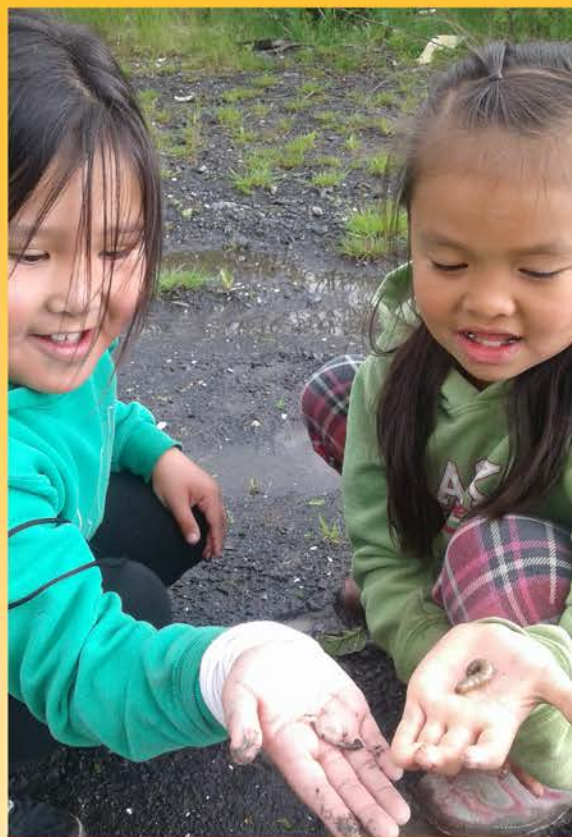
Healthy activities encourage everyone to get up and move.



Youth create Super Hero Shields to reflect on their emotional and mental well-being, and to explore what makes them unique.

*"The staff were great! We have different programs come into the village and it requires a lot of coordination and work on our part. But your counselors were very self-sufficient. They sort of knew how the community worked and could run program on their own. It was really appreciated!"*

—Amy Shellabarger, Old Harbor



Quality outdoor programs foster stewardship with the natural world.

Camp Fire Alaska's mission is to give every child the opportunity to find the best in themselves and others in a fun, safe learning environment.

For information on any of Camp Fire Alaska's programs, visit [www.campfireak.org](http://www.campfireak.org)

2017 Rural Alaska Program Report





# Overview

*"Growing up here, it was really boring in the summers because everyone goes out to the bay for fishing. It is really good that Camp Fire comes to give the kids something to do!"*

– Brianna Nelson, Koliganek



**Over the past 53 years, Camp Fire has served 88 communities in Rural Alaska.**

*"The kids love Camp Fire and the staff really bonded with the kids. The kids loved how the staff would spend extra time to teach them things."*

– Cheryl Maxie, Napaskiak



2017 Rural Alaska Program Report



**True to Camp Fire's values, we continue to create opportunities for youth to find their spark, lift their voice, and discover who they are.**

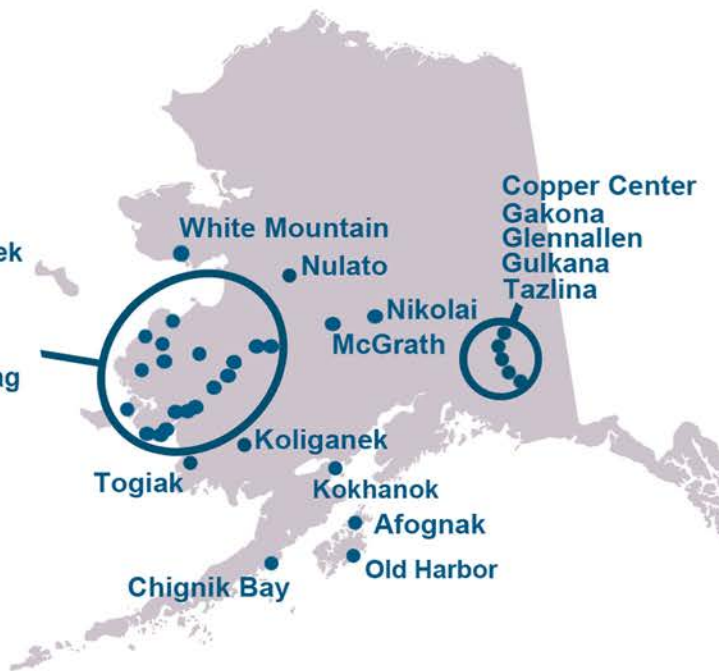
Camp Fire's relationship with rural Alaska began in 1964, in response to that year's massive earthquake. With the support of a national Camp Fire Fund, volunteers and supplies were sent to deliver youth programming in impacted communities, so parents could devote their full energy to cleanup and reconstruction.

Following this initial outreach, Camp Fire's Rural Alaska Program quickly expanded to address the high drowning rates in Alaska by offering swimming and teaching children about cold-water safety. Our program has now grown to include healthy life skills, boating safety, creative arts, cooperative games, outdoor recreation, teen activities, and community events.

We bring the staff, the supplies, the food and the fun while we strive to emphasize the importance of healthy life choices, reducing high-risk behaviors, and encouraging youth and community engagement wherever we go.



Alakanuk  
Akiak  
Aniak  
Bethel  
Chevak  
Chuathbaluk  
Crooked Creek  
Kongiganak  
Kotlik  
Kwigillingok  
Lower Kalskag  
Marshall  
Napakiak  
Napaskiak  
Pitkas Point  
St. Mary's  
Tuntutuliak  
Tununak



*"It is so important youth can go somewhere to learn, play, and hangout with their friends that is safe, supportive, and engaging."*

— Sharena McKindy, McGrath



Playing outside in Marshall.



Nature Treasure Hunt  
in Crooked Creek.

## 2017 Highlights

33 COMMUNITIES

44 COMMUNITY EVENTS

93 WEEKS

2,594 PARTICIPANTS\*

4,101 LBS. FRESH PRODUCE

21,471 MEALS SERVED

\* youth = 1,865 | teens = 388 | adults = 341

✦ Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) and Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC) provided funding and staff to support the development and delivery of our Wellness Curriculum.

✦ The Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) provided funding that allowed us to reach 39% more youth and spend 50% more time in communities throughout the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

✦ Building on our commitment to connect with Alaska youth, we traveled to eight new communities from Bristol Bay to Kodiak, and from the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta to the Lake and Peninsula Borough.





# The Camp Fire Difference



Through hands-on learning experiences and mentorship, Camp Fire teaches and improves important life skills.

*"There were these two boys that were very tense and ready to physically fight each other. We sat and talked with them....It took an hour, but they decided not to hurt each other. The boys shook hands. I think this shows another way Camp Fire works to light that spark, to show that there is another way."*

—Tom, Camp Fire Staff



2017 Rural Alaska Program Report



At Camp Fire, we create experiences to build confidence and leadership.

## What Makes Our Program Different

- ✧ Our programs are developed to fit the needs and wants of each community we serve.
- ✧ We stay for two to four weeks, allowing for deeper connections and enhanced program quality.
- ✧ Camp Fire is a leader in youth development with ties to rural Alaska for over 50 years.
- ✧ Our programs have impact—now and in the future.



Learning to make *aqutak* from an elder in Kokhanok.



# Wellness and Nutrition

One of the cornerstones of our Rural Alaska Program is teaching youth about wellness and healthy life choices.

With community input and support from ANTHC and YKHC, we have created a wellness curriculum that covers physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being that is culturally relevant and holistic. This curriculum emphasizes healthy life choices that prevent chronic diseases such as diabetes and tobacco use.

This year, we also partnered with the Food Bank of Alaska to provide 21,471 meals for youth. Along with healthy meals twice a day, we also provided fresh produce to communities that have a hard time securing access to such items.



Learning all about the heart and how to keep it strong.



Diagramming the body to better understand ourselves.



Fresh produce was delivered to promote healthy choices and to increase awareness of local resources.



Building healthy habits everyday.

*"Helen read EVERY food label. If there was more than a zero in the sugar column, she'd get upset. 'We're kids, we shouldn't have this much sugar!' So we said, 'Alright, let's look at pop.' and then her mind exploded when she saw how much sugar there was in pop."*

—Michael, Camp Fire Staff





# Community Connection



At Camp Fire, we provide a safe, nurturing place for youth and all members of the community to thrive.



Community members in Alakanuk partner with Camp Fire to host a traditional dance.

*"An elder gave me her earrings — took them right out of her ears and gave them to me. She said, 'This is a gift...because this is your first Yupik dance. This is special. I want you to have this, so you'll remember it.'"*

— Pepper, Camp Fire Staff



2017 Rural Alaska Program Report



Fun events encourage all community members to come out and enjoy Camp Fire.

Deeper and more authentic relationships and connections were the over-riding goals of our 2017 program. Camp Fire hosted 44 community events throughout the summer, including game nights, cultural events and stories, potlucks and cookouts, and community-wide art projects—all with the goal of providing opportunities for youth and families to engage with one another in meaningful ways.

We hold our community relationships in high esteem. By opening the door and inviting us in, communities have created an environment where our program—and their youth—thrive.

This summer, 33 communities welcomed Camp Fire and provided opportunities to share experiences, deepen bonds, and strengthen our rural connections.



# Community Partners



To all of our Community Contacts, thank you for all you do!

We have been incredibly lucky to work with engaged communities and fantastic volunteers who help make this program possible. Each community we serve identifies someone who helps our program run smoothly and helps us meet our high standards. Community Contacts work with us year-round to secure appropriate facilities for running our program and housing for our staff, receiving supply shipments, and fostering community engagement when our staff arrive.

Without the commitment, time, and effort these volunteers give to Camp Fire and their communities, our Rural Alaska Program would not be as effective as it is today.



Community potlucks with fresh produce provided by Camp Fire are always a big hit.



Community contacts make it happen! In Togiak, Helen teaches youth how to fillet fish.

*"Subsistence fishing is our way of life and I was invited to instruct kids how to fillet a salmon. It was good for the kids to experience this hands-on. Some had done it before and for others it was a first time experience."*

– Helen Gregorio, Togiak





# Staff



Camp Fire Staff attend cultural awareness training at the Alaska Native Heritage Center.

## 2017 Training Highlights

- \* Cultural Competency and Alaska Native Culture taught by The First Alaskans Institute and the Alaska Native Heritage Center
- \* Cold Water and Boating Safety taught by Alaska Office of Boating Safety
- \* Youth Mental Health First Aid training and certification



Camp Fire provides staff with lifeguard training and certification.

*"Camp Fire was very motivated to get our youth excited and interested in age-appropriate activities. Your staff did a phenomenal job! They treated our youth, adults, and elders with great respect and showed deep passion for what they do."*

— Denise Malutin, Afognak



2017 Rural Alaska Program Report

Camp Fire Alaska's programs continue to grow and expand because of successful partnerships, hard work, and our amazing professional staff. We recruit from all across the United States, so our staff bring diverse backgrounds and experience in youth development, as well as a love of adventure.

Our in-depth training focuses on a variety of skills including leadership, risk management, youth behavior guidance, social and emotional learning, and outdoor education. Trainings are designed to provide staff with the tools they need to successfully create relationships and empower youth.



Camp Fire staff create experiences to teach active and healthy lifestyles.





## Partner Highlights

### Those who went above & beyond assisting our mission:

- ✧ AVCP funded 18 communities in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta for four weeks each, increasing our time in the region by 50%.
- ✧ ANTHC and YKHC provided funding for developing our Wellness Curriculum, fresh produce, and supplies. YKHC also provided three staff members to travel to programs and deliver activities focused on diabetes and tobacco prevention.
- ✧ Ravn Alaska offered discounted freight costs for shipping over 10,500 pounds of supplies and food.
- ✧ DHL Express helped coordinate critical resources and logistical support through Alaska CargoPort/Lynxs Group and Alaska Northern Courier to ensure the shipment of hundreds of boxes of supplies throughout the state.
- ✧ GCI made a generous cash contribution and donated 2,000 backpacks and water bottles.
- ✧ Southcentral Foundation and ANTHC donated 2,000 toothbrushes and bags of dental floss.

## *Thank you!*

ABC Motorhome Rentals  
Ahtna Corporation  
Alaska CargoPort/Lynxs Group  
Alaska Native Heritage Center  
Alaska Northern Courier  
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium  
Alaska Office of Boating Safety  
Alaska Pacific University  
Association of Village Council Presidents  
Bent Prop Inn  
Bristol Bay Area Health Corporation  
Charlie's Produce  
Chugach School District  
DHL Express  
Donlin Gold  
Doyon, Limited  
First Alaskans Institute  
Food Bank of Alaska  
GCI  
Kaladi Brothers Coffee  
Kuspuk School District  
Lower Kuskokwim School District  
Lower Yukon School District  
Meyers Farm  
Northrim Bank  
Ravn Alaska  
Red Cross of Alaska  
RurAL CAP  
Southcentral Foundation  
State of Alaska, Dept. Education & Early Development  
Taiga Mining Company  
University Alaska, Anchorage  
Yukon Kuskokwim Health Corporation







## Join Us—Rural Alaska Is Waiting

Through the contributions and partnerships we have fostered over the years, we have had the opportunity and the privilege of reaching thousands of Alaskans in over 80 communities — and our program continues to grow every year.

We thank our partners, donors, staff, community contacts, and everyone who has helped us provide valuable and meaningful programs to youth across rural Alaska.

### *To become a partner—*

Joanne Phillips-Nutter, Director of Development and Marketing  
(907) 257-8819 or [jphillips-nutter@campfireak.org](mailto:jphillips-nutter@campfireak.org)

### *To bring Camp Fire's Rural Alaska Program to your community—*

Trina Stewart, Rural Program Coordinator  
(907) 257-8843 or [tstewart@campfireak.org](mailto:tstewart@campfireak.org)

### *Join our team and work with us—*

(907) 257-8803 or [jobs@campfireak.org](mailto:jobs@campfireak.org)  
<https://www.campfireak.org/jobs/>

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